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REMINISCENCES OF THE TEXAS REVOLUTION<sup>1</sup>

ANDREW A. BOYLE

On the seventh day of January, 1836, at San Patricio de las Nueces, I enlisted in Captain Westover's battery (the first company of regular artillery in the Texas army). Our command was soon after ordered to Goliad, where it was incorporated with the forces commanded by Colonel Fannin. Colonels Bowie and Crockett,<sup>2</sup> then in command of the Alamo, sent a courier to Colonel Fannin in the latter part of February, asking him for reinforcements. A hundred men<sup>3</sup> were at once detailed, and had crossed the San Antonio river on their way to the assistance of the doomed garrison, when they were recalled on account of a report brought in by a scout named "Comanche," of the advance of the Mexican army under General Urrea, toward San Patricio. The main body of the enemy, under Santa Ana, had marched directly from Laredo upon San Antonio. Our commander, by the advice of "Comanche," determined to march to San Patricio, leaving one company in garrison at Goliad. The character of the scout was notoriously bad, and Colonel Fannin was informed of the fact, but gave no heed to the warning, although two of us volunteered to go to San Patricio and ascertain the truth of the report. Three days' rations were distributed, and everything was in readiness to commence the march the next morning, when an American named

<sup>1</sup>These recollections of the Texas revolution were dictated by Andrew A. Boyle in 1870, just before his death, to his daughter, Mrs. W. H. Workman. For the manuscript *THE QUARTERLY* is indebted to his granddaughter, Miss Gertrude Dardin Workman. Although Mr. Boyle's memory of details was inaccurate, the paper is important in two particulars: (1) it adds another witness to the list of Texan participants who have unanimously testified that Fannin did not surrender at discretion, as General Urrea claimed, and (2) it gives a first hand account of the execution of the wounded prisoners at Goliad.

<sup>2</sup>The regulars at the Alamo were commanded by Travis, the volunteers by Bowie. Crockett held no official position.

<sup>3</sup>Contemporary statements place this number between three and four hundred men. See letters of Captain John Sowers Brooks (*THE QUARTERLY*, IX, 179, 181, 183, 191) and Dr. Bernard's Journal in *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, I, 616.

Ayres arrived from the Old Mission, some fifteen miles distant in the direction of San Patricio, and brought reliable news of the arrival of the Mexicans at that place, and of their maltreating all Americans there, bearing themselves with special insolence toward the women. Colonel Fannin immediately despatched Captain King with a party of twenty men to remove all American women and children to our fort. Captain King was surrounded by a superior force of the enemy, but cut his way through them and retreated to the Old Mission Church, from which point he sent a messenger to Colonel Fannin, stating his position and asking for reinforcements. Fannin sent Colonel Ward, with his Georgia Battalion, to King's assistance. On Ward's arrival at the Mission Church, a difference of opinion arose as to who should command the whole force. Not being able to come to any agreement, they separated; Ward retreating in a southeasterly direction for some distance, and then striking for the San Antonio river with the intention of joining us. King got out of the church, and after a skirmish with the Mexicans, retreated on the direct road to Goliad. He and his men were taken prisoners, tied together with rawhide, and shot immediately. We heard of the surrender and killing of King and his men, and the retreat of Colonel Ward in the direction above mentioned, and were in daily expectation of Ward's command arriving at Goliad. About the 8th or 9th of March we heard of the fall of the Alamo and the killing of Colonels Bowie and Crockett and all their men. Colonels Bowie and Crockett having refused all propositions for surrender or capitulation, the garrison held out until reduced to seven men, who asked for quarter and were refused.<sup>1</sup> On the 17th of March the enemy appeared on the opposite side of the river. We sent over a skirmishing party of one company (under Captain Shackelford's command, I think), who had an engagement with the enemy, we watching from the ramparts with the most intense anxiety.<sup>2</sup> They were recalled by Colonel Fannin, after the enemy's retreat to the Old Mission Church.

<sup>1</sup>Ramón Martínez Caro, Santa Anna's secretary, says (*Verdadera Idea de la primera Compañía de Tejas*, etc., 11) that after the Alamo was taken five men who had hidden themselves during the action surrendered to General Castrillon, but were shot by Santa Anna's order.

<sup>2</sup>Compare Bernard's account of this skirmish, which he dates March 18. *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, I, 619-620.

On the following day the enemy appeared in force at the same place, and orders were given by Colonel Fannin to bake bread sufficient for several days, and carry dried beef sufficient for the same length of time. The guns were taken down from the bastions, and orders were also given to be ready to march before daylight in the morning. From cause unknown to me, we did not evacuate the fort until between 8 and 9 o'clock next morning. We marched down the river and crossed at a ford below, which was effected without difficulty. Our object in crossing at the lower instead of the upper ford in front of the Old Mission, was to avoid, if possible, an action with the enemy (he outnumbering us at least six to one), and to get into the interior of Texas and join Houston's army. We continued our march until we crossed a creek called Manawee [Manahuilla], distant from the crossing about three miles. We traveled slowly, our cannon and baggage wagons being drawn by oxen. A halt was called and we ate some breakfast.

After breakfast, the march was continued; nothing new transpiring until about half past twelve o'clock; the Mexican army was then descried on our left and rear; their cavalry approached us rapidly, seemingly with the intention of cutting us off from the timber of the Colet creek; they fired a few shots at us, when Colonel Fannin exclaimed (I was standing close by him at the time), "that's the signal for battle; I won't retreat another foot." We then unlimbered our pieces, being six in number, formed ourselves into a hollow square, placing the baggage wagons, hospital wagon and magazine in the centre; we remained in this position five or ten minutes, when Colonel Fannin, seeing clearly the main object of the enemy was to cut us off from the timber, ordered us to limber up again and continue the march. We left the road, marching in an oblique direction to the left toward the nearest timber; when within as well as I can recollect, three-quarters or one mile of the timber, the enemy's infantry overtook us and we were obliged to halt. We formed as previously, our little force then not numbering more than 311 men, maintained an action from half past one o'clock, P. M., and fought until near dark, when the enemy retreated, leaving twenty-five of us killed and wounded. I had been shot in the right leg at about half past three in the afternoon. Our real trouble commenced after the retreat of the enemy, and

arose principally from the want of water, from which the wounded especially suffered severely. A few of our men dug for water while the rest were throwing up intrenchments, as we expected to renew the battle on the following day. In the fight just finished we had killed our oxen and used the carcasses for breastworks. I lay that night near Colonel Fannin, who had been slightly wounded in the thigh. I remember his good-naturedly offering me his "good leg for a pillow." In the morning the Mexicans again advanced, largely reinforced from General Santa Ana's division, and well supplied with artillery. After firing a few round shot, all of which passed over our heads, they hoisted a white flag, which we answered. A consultation of officers was held, at which it was concluded to capitulate, as preferable to attempting to prolong a hopeless struggle. Our wounded men were on our hands, and suffering; we had no means of caring for them, and Colonel Fannin strongly expressed his determination not to abandon them. Two officers from each army then met in parley and agreed upon articles of capitulation, guaranteeing our lives and personal property. We agreed to give up all government property in our possession, and to remain prisoners of war until honorably exchanged or sent to the United States, upon parole never to return to Texas. These articles were signed by both parties, and the surrender was completed. Those of our command able to march were at once taken to Goliad, the wounded waiting two or three days for Mexican carts. Our sufferings were intense, on account of the heat of the sun, thirst, and want of medical attendance. Upon our arrival at Goliad we—the wounded—were placed in the hospital; the rest of the command was guarded in the yard of the fort. Just one week after the surrender, all the wounded men were marched out of the fort in separate divisions and shot. Soon after, a Mexican officer came into the hospital, and ordered me to tell all those able to walk to go outside. I interpreted for him, and the men commenced gathering up their blankets. In the meantime, four Mexican soldiers came in and began to carry out those who were too severely wounded to walk. I was assisted by two comrades who were but slightly wounded. As we passed the door, an officer told me we were all to be shot. This I told the men. The wounded were placed in the corner of the yard upon which the

church door fronts. A company of soldiers formed in front of us and loaded their pieces with ball cartridge. Then a file of men under a corporal took two of our number, marched them out toward the company, and after bandaging their eyes, made them lie with their faces to the ground, after which, placing the muzzles close to their heads, they shot them as they lay. At this time an officer, apparently of distinction, came into the yard and asked in a loud voice, in English, whether any one named Boyle was there or not. I was near him as he entered, and answered at once. He then ordered an officer to take me to the officers' hospital and have my wound attended to, saying that he would call upon me there. When I arrived at the hospital the Mexican officers seemed kindly disposed to me, and gave me a pair of "armas de pelo" to lie on. Mr. Brooks, Aid to Colonel Fannin, was there at the time, with his thigh badly shattered near the hip. I found him entirely ignorant of what had been going on. Upon being informed he said, "I suppose it will be our turn next." In less than five minutes four Mexicans carried him out, cot and all, placed him in the street not fifteen feet from the door, in a position in which I could not avoid seeing him, and there shot him.<sup>1</sup> His body was instantly rifled of his gold watch, stripped, and thrown into a pit at the side of the street. Colonel Ward and his command, who had been captured between the Lavaca and Navidad rivers a few days after our surrender, were also shot. The whole number of men thus barbarously executed was, according to Mexican report, four hundred and seventeen.<sup>2</sup>

A few hours after the murder of Mr. Brooks, the officer who had asked for me in the yard came into the hospital. Addressing me in English he said: "Make your mind easy, Sir; your life is spared." I asked if I might inquire the name of the person to whom I was indebted for my life. "Certainly," said he, "my name is General Francisco Garay, second in command of Urrea's division." He had taken my name and description from my sister,

<sup>1</sup>This account of Brooks's death agrees exactly with that of Doctors Shackelford and Field. *THE QUARTERLY*, IX, 196-198.

<sup>2</sup>The real number seems to have been between three hundred and twenty and three hundred and thirty. See Bancroft, *North Mexican States and Texas*, II, 235, note 70.

Mary, at whose house he had been quartered while his division occupied San Patricio, and by whom and my brother Roderick he had been kindly treated. She and my brother had refused all remuneration from him, only asking that if I should ever fall into his hands I should be kindly treated. The General informed me that he himself was on the eve of departure to join General Urrea, but that he had given orders to General Portillo, commandant of the garrison, to furnish me a passport whenever I should call for it. With this he took his leave. The passport was obtained without difficulty in pursuance of the order given by General Garay, and I secured passage in an ox-cart to the Mission and thence to San Patricio, where I remained. We knew nothing of the battle of San Jacinto until about the 28th of April, although we had noticed Mexican troops traveling towards the Rio Grande. A dragoon rode up one day and asked me to sell him two bits' worth of dried meat; I offered to give him all the meat he might want if he would answer a few questions. He consented, and I learned for the first time that a battle had been fought on the 21st near San Jacinto Creek, and that the result had been disastrous to the invading army; that General Santa Ana had been taken prisoner, and that the Americans had seemed inclined to give no quarter, charging with the cry of "Alamo and Fannin." The remains of the Mexican forces engaged, as well as General Urrea's division, which had been stationed at Brazoria, were in full retreat. The effect of such glad news upon my feelings may be imagined. General Garay arrived a few days afterwards, and called to see us as he passed hastily through town. At his request, I accompanied him to Matamoras. Upon arriving there, he explained that stringent orders had been given to the effect that no American, who had been at any time a prisoner in Mexican hands, should be suffered to remain in Texas. He also informed me that all prisoners were to be closely confined, but that he would allow me the freedom of the city, upon my giving my parole not to attempt to escape. About three weeks afterward, the General invited me to accompany him to the City of Mexico, stating that I should no longer be considered as a prisoner, in case I accepted his offer, which was accompanied with the most profuse offers of friendship and assistance. Notwithstanding the gratitude which I naturally felt toward the preserver of my

own life, I was compelled to decline, on account of my anxiety to see my relatives in the United States. At my urgent solicitation, General Garay then released me from my parole, and left me free to control my own movements. I concluded to start on foot for Brazos Santiago, but experienced great difficulty in procuring from the alcalde the necessary permit to leave the city. I was afraid to apply to him directly, and all the American and Irish residents strongly remonstrated against my doing so. I finally succeeded in passing myself as the son of an old Irishman who had obtained a passport for New Orleans, and had myself included in it; afterwards I had a separate document made out for myself. The next day I took passage on a brig at Brazos Santiago, and six days after, landed at New Orleans. I at once visited the Texas Consul in that city, Mr. Bryan,<sup>1</sup> but found that he could do for me nothing more than to furnish a free pass to Texas. Being out of money and in rags, I was compelled to seek employment. I engaged with a painter for two dollars and a half a day, and went to work painting St. Mary's Market, though I had never painted except in water colors. I worked eleven days, at the expiration of which time I drew my money, purchased some clothes, and accepted Mr. Bryan's offer. He procured me passage on a schooner for the mouth of the Brazos river, where I landed in a few days. General Burnet, the first President of the Republic of Texas, then living at Velasco, gave me a letter to General Rusk, at that time commanding the army on the Guadalupe River. I walked to General Rusk's camp, a distance of a hundred and fifty miles, in five days. He was in daily expectation of the advance of the Mexicans, but excused me, on account of my impaired health, from further service in the army. I had a severe attack of fever and ague in Victoria, where General Rusk's head-quarters were. As soon as I recovered, I went to Columbia, then the seat of government, and obtained a passport for New Orleans.

Los Angeles, December 15th, 1870.

<sup>1</sup>Bryan was not officially a consul, because at that time the United States had not recognized the independence of Texas, but he discharged many of the duties of a consul.